





Abstracts

Gender and woodcutting in Malian savannahs: pathway to emancipation?

Presenting Authors

Denis Gautier

Authors

Denis Gautier - CIRAD, Burkina Faso

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Emancipation and individualization strategies are an important but disregarded part of adaptation strategies in development projects, linked to a variety of local power relations and competing interests over resources. We address how the social status of different savannah users in Mali has changed over the years in link with changes in savannah structure and composition. More specifically, we address how interactions between individual social status and changes in the savannah influence the emancipatory pathways of women and young men. By comparing an inventory of the same savannah area and the socio-economic surveys of the same households in a village between 2003 and 2010, we identified pathways of co-evolution between individuals and the savannah. Our findings show that the disengagement of women and young men from collective activities resulted in the emergence of different but related trends: individualization and emancipation from the traditional system. Women and young men use newly available resources to create new patterns of social relations, by emancipating themselves, changing their portfolio of activities and investing in individual tasks generating incomes such as woodcutting or market gardening. Although the observed trends did not produce a radical transformation of the unbalanced gender relationships, since this has to be accompanied by changes in social and cultural norms in policies, these changes in the savannah ecosystem offer vulnerable people an opportunity to move towards emancipation, instead of being considered as degradation and impoverishment.

Keywords:woodcutting; savannah; socio-economic differentiation; gender; emancipatory pathways; Mali

Sessions

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